

the mixture obtained being pre-conditioned in a solvent, in an inert atmosphere at a temperature of 0 to 80°C, for 1 minute to 5 hours, prior to use as a catalyst.

2. (Twice Amended) A catalytic composition according to claim 21, wherein said divalent nickel compound is a nickel carboxylate with the formula:



where R_1 is an alkyl, cycloalkyl, alkenyl, aryl, aralkyl or alkaryl radical containing up to to carbon atoms.

B1 Cont
3. (Twice Amended) A catalytic composition according to claim 1 wherein the pK_a of said organic Bronsted acid is a maximum of 3 at 20°C and is a halogenocarboxylic acid of the formula R_2COOH where R_2 is a halogenated alkyl radical.

4. (Twice Amended) A catalytic composition according to claim 3 wherein said organic Bronsted acid is a halogenoacetic acid of formula $CX_pH_{3p}-COOH$ where X is fluorine, chlorine, bromine or iodine, and p is a whole number from 1 to 3.

B2
6. (Twice Amended) A catalytic composition according to claim 21, wherein the preconditioning comprises mixing the three constituents in a hydrocarbon or halogenohydrocarbon solvent with stirring and in an inert atmosphere at a controlled temperature of 0°C to 80°C and for a duration of 1 minute to 5 hours.

B3
8. (Twice Amended) A catalytic composition according to claim 1 wherein said hydrocarbylaluminum dihalide contains an aluminum trihalide, the mixture of these two compounds having formula AlR_nX_{3-n} , R and X being as defined in claim 1 and where n is a number between 0 and 1.

Please add new claim 21 as follows:

24 --21. (New) A catalyst composition comprising (a) at least one divalent nickel compound of the formula $(R_1COO)_2Ni$, wherein R_1 is alkyl, cycloalkyl, alkenyl, aryl, aralkyl or alkaryl of up to 20 carbon atoms; (b) at least one hydrocarbylaluminum dihalide of the formula $AlRX_2$, wherein R is hydrocarbyl of 1 to 12 carbon atoms and X is chlorine or bromine; and (c) at least one Bronsted acid; said composition being preconditioned in a solvent.--